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PROMOTION OF HEALTH  
IN  
LITERARY INSTITUTIONS

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*With the respects  
of Henry Brown.*

PROMOTION

OF

HEALTH

IN

LITERARY INSTITUTIONS.

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*Society for Promoting Manual Labor in Literary  
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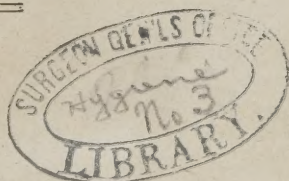
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## PROMOTION OF HEALTH, &c.

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*First Annual Report of the Society for Promoting Manual Labor in Literary Institutions, including the Report of their General Agent, Theodore D. Weld. New York: 1833.*

THE numerous and nameless chronic complaints which are all comprehended under the general and expressive name of *ill-health*, are peculiarly common in these times among all classes of the community, especially among those who devote themselves to literary pursuits. The ill-health of students has long been proverbial; but it seems to have become far more frequent within the last half century, at least in this country. It is so common now, that hardly an individual is to be found, among this portion of society, who is not, or has not been, a considerable sufferer. It is so often, so almost universally an accompaniment of literary pursuits, that one is able to predict it, almost to a certainty, in the case of him who is seen giving himself up to such occupations. The terms *invalid* and *student* are nearly synonymous. The complaints in question are every day wearing out and destroying prematurely some of the most valued lives in the land; annihilating the usefulness of multitudes; and driving out of the world an amount of human happiness hardly conceivable. They are scattering to the winds the best hopes of friends and the world; wounding the cause of religion and humanity; and laying in the dust some of the best and noblest monuments of human greatness. They almost *unsex* our literary men. They make them a sickly and effeminate race—the miserable abortions of physical degeneracy—the mere apologists of all that which characterizes *manhood*. By an undermining and insidious process, they diffuse a poison throughout the whole nature of man, touch him and deprave him in all his capacities and relations, unbinge his mind, dethrone reason, impair the moral sense, render him a burden to himself and his friends, and transform the greatest and best of men into mere ciphers or monsters in society. They are the common cause of weakness and irritability of mind, fickleness, obstinacy, selfishness,—of unnatural attachments and antipathies, exaggerated and partial views of things, and the ten thousand varieties of *monomania* which pass under the milder and more acceptable name of *eccentricities*. They are the source of much of that personal wretchedness which is so frequently to be found in

the midst of innocence and plenty, honor and friendship. They give birth to sentiments and propensities, to passions and desires which urge to the violation of the laws of God and the rights of man—all those graver offenses which ruin reputation and expel from society. These complaints have been the means of rendering our literary institutions almost the objects of dread to parents solicitous for the welfare of their sons, and to philanthropists moved with generous sentiments for the physical and mental soundness, and the active and extended usefulness, of the rising generation. They have been, moreover, important means of deteriorating the race, according to the laws of hereditary descent—a matter of no trifling moment. Imperfections and deformities of body and mind, however induced, when they have become thoroughly constitutional, are transmitted to the offspring. This fact, though generally overlooked, is well established. Monstrous and degrading evils are thus wrought into the character of the species. These evils are diffused and extended from generation to generation, until the circle which bounds them acquires a breadth which it is not easy to span. This view of the subject in question should astonish and appal.

That the existing condition of our literary men is most melancholy, and demands the intent consideration of the philosopher and philanthropist, is now very generally felt. The public feel as though something commensurate with the evil to be corrected, must be done. They see their immediate and vital interests at stake—the hopes of religion and virtue in jeopardy—the cause of human improvement and human happiness periled. The mode, of education, particularly, and the habits and practices of youth in our institutions of learning, are attracting the eyes of all. We anticipate happy results from the deep feeling which has been awakened, and from the spirit of inquiry which is abroad.

That mental occupation or literary pursuits, are in themselves injurious to health, is what we cannot for a moment believe—cannot reconcile with the benevolent institutions and designs of God, and the harmony of all his works. The mind of man is evidently made for constant action, in the waking state. The power of thought is his noblest and best prerogative. So the Creator pronounced it when he made man in his own image, and breathed into him a living soul. So his own consciousness and the desires implanted within him, declare in unequivocal terms. So every thing about him proclaims—his situation, his wants, and all his connections, and relations. He is placed in a world in which his liveliest gratifications and his most exalted happiness, indeed his very existence, have a natural dependence upon the exercise of his rational powers. The various faculties of which he is possessed, cannot be placed in relation to their proper objects, or attain the ends for which they were designed, (in which the essence of all true happiness consists,) without



the continued agency and efficient action of mind. How is it, then, that mental activity is connected with disease and suffering, thus destroying the very capacity for action, and defeating the very end of itself? If this connection is necessary, does it not bring the laws of God and nature into direct and palpable collision?—does it not set the plain institutions of the Creator at irreconcilable war with each other? But as there is not and cannot be any such contradiction or collision, is not the supposition an absurdity? Inasmuch then, as mental occupation, (even that degree of it which is productive of the greatest results, in the end,) is in perfect accordance with the constitution of things, the arrangements of providence, and the circumstances of man,—indeed is the very fulfilling of the end of his existence,—it is clear that such occupation merely cannot be productive of sickness and suffering; but on the contrary, is itself the condition on which the most perfect and universal health or happiness are promised—the only condition on which is to be expected the reward attached to the legitimate exercise of one's faculties, and the discharge of duties imposed by the Author of our being. This position might be abundantly confirmed by an appeal to the testimony and experience of mankind, but it is here deemed unnecessary.

If exercise of mind, then, and the complaints in question have not the relation of cause and effect, how is it that they are such frequent concomitants? If the first is not the cause of the second, is it possible to ascertain what is? Is it possible to disentangle the evils to which we have alluded from accidental associations, and trace them to their true and sufficient cause? A careful inquiry into the nature of the disorders of students, their habits and practices, the constitution and laws of the human body and mind, current modes of education, and the customs and fashions of the times, will enable us to do this. *All* these circumstances, however, must be considered and weighed. If some of them are neglected, if the importance of others is estimated falsely, the search for truth—the whole truth—will not be satisfactory. A principal element in this inquiry—an adequate knowledge of man as he is—of man in his three-fold nature as *an animal, intellectual and affective being*, has too often been wanting. That knowledge which is based on partial views—on views which separate man from himself, is of no available importance. Principles derived from a consideration of man's intellectual being alone, or of his intellect and affections alone, conduct to false conclusions. This animal nature, the basis, the substratum, the primordial germ of all the others, must be taken into the account. The laws which relate to man in this compound character, the influence which each of these natures exerts upon the other, the effects of external agents and agencies, and the play of its own organs upon the human machine, are incompre-

hensible except by the aid of sound physiology. And here we may be allowed to express our surprise, that this eminently useful and delightful science, almost the foundation of all others, has been so long and so totally neglected by the general student, as a branch of physical knowledge. To attempt, as has often been done, to understand the natural and reciprocal action of the intellect, the passions, and the corporeal functions, and to appreciate rightly the modifications occasioned by external influences, without its assistance, is evidently absurd. Hence the inquiries which have been instituted to discover the relation between health and certain pursuits, have been to a great extent unsuccessful. Of the precise combination of causes which is the source of the numerous complaints of students, there is a great degree of ignorance, even at this day. Such causes have been sought exclusively in too severe intellectual application, in errors of diet, in the neglect of muscular exercise, or perhaps in a disregard of the innocent pleasures and amusements of life. Now two or more, or oftener, all these causes may be operative in different cases, and with different degrees of force; and the inquiry which is directed to the consideration of only one, and that, it may be, of subordinate concern, does not promise any useful results. Besides, the knowledge that any one of these causes is truly influential, can be of but little practical utility, unless its effects upon the living functions, and the laws and sympathies of the human system are accurately known. The isolated fact that neglect of exercise is among the sources of ill-health, does not suggest any certain means of preventing the latter, unless this neglect is taken in connection with the other errors of conduct and practice, which may co-exist with it; nor does this fact lead with any certainty to the application of a remedy for the disordered movements which the want of exercise may have occasioned, unless the nature of these movements, and the circumstances necessary to give the required effect, are familiarly understood. For instance, though corporeal inaction very commonly has an influence in producing the complaints of students, mere mechanical exercise of the muscles does not promise to preserve his health; and it is well known, that it is not adequate to his restoration when he has become a debilitated and nervous invalid. Even were the neglect of bodily exercise, the only circumstance in which the literary man had erred, the mere use of his limbs, when that use is irksome, or connected with disagreeable associations, would not restore the lost balance of his functions, and free him from the torments of dyspepsia. That our knowledge and use of particular facts, then may not be empirical, it is necessary that they be referred to their principles—principles which it is the business of physiology to unfold. With such principles in our hands, we shall be able to comprehend the operation of agents and influences, external and inter-



nal upon the human economy ; and shall also perhaps be able to deduce from them practical rules of action, by the observance of which, disease and suffering may be prevented or averted, and lost health recovered.

If we regard man analytically or anatomically, we find him a compound being—an assemblage of contiguous and related organs, in some sense independent of each other, as the brain, lungs, stomach, muscles, nerves, organs of sense, etc. These compose the man as a part of the natural world. Each organ has its own appropriate use, or in the language of physiology, *function*. Thus the lungs are for respiration, the eye for vision, the brain for the manifestation of thought and emotion,\* etc. It is in the proper exercise of these functions, individually and collectively, or of the organs upon which they depend, that *health* consists. Where health exists, there is an equal and proportionate activity of *all* the organs,—a condition which is accompanied by a sort of pleasurable sensation, (not the mere negation of pain,) which though not easy to describe, every one has felt, who has ever enjoyed the blessing of sound health. To secure this proper exercise, there is implanted in each organ, or set of organs, what is called a *want* ; which is as various in its nature as the functions are various, and specific in each instance. The end and appropriate design of this, is the due exercise of the organ to which it appertains. This want, when its object is present, is transformed into a feeling of complacency, or the pleasurable sensation above alluded to : in the absence of its object, it becomes a sensation of uneasiness, pain, desire, or aversion. When the organ is too little exercised for the good of itself and the animal economy, there results uneasiness, and desire, as in the case of that want which has its seat in the stomach, known by the name of hunger. When the organ is too actively exercised, it is weariness, lassitude, pain, aversion, as in the instance of muscular fatigue, or a surfeit. In all these latter cases, it prompts to acts which are necessary for self-conservation. It sometimes *impels* almost irresistibly. We turn away from food in the case of satiety, with loathing ; we seek it with earnestness, even violence, when hungry. We are compelled to draw a finger from the blaze of a candle, and cannot avoid closing the eye when its organization is likely to be injured by a too sudden and intense light. This want as it exists in the muscular system, becomes

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\* It is here taken for granted that the brain is the organ of the mind. For an intelligible and popular statement of the argument proving this, see Brigham on mental cultivation. It will be there seen, that mind in its manifestation, or in its phenomena as presented to our senses, has the same relation to the brain, that sight has to the eye, which brings the former within the physiological definition of a function.



pleasure when the muscles are duly exercised, as seen in the voluntary muscular activity of the child, and the gratification which he seems to derive from it. It becomes lassitude, or even pain, when this exercise is too prolonged or too severe; and we notice the boy withdrawing from his sports and seeking repose. If abstinence from this species of exercise is protracted by constraint, we witness the utmost impatience, and when freedom is obtained, the most *active* demonstrations of joy.

The end of these *wants*, or *instincts*, as they have sometimes been called, is the preservation of the individual and the species. They are implanted in our organs by a beneficent Providence, to conduct us safely in those things which pertain to our well-being, in which reason would prove an inadequate and blind, or an uncertain and too dilatory guide. Their decisions are immediate, imperative, unerring; while those of reason are slow, calculating, often doubtful, and often false. How long would life be protracted were the function of respiration committed to the guidance of the reasoning faculty? Reason is often called upon to execute requisitions, or to provide and select means to gratify the demands of our organs; but it is never trusted to point out the *reasonableness* of these requisitions or demands. It has an important part to act in procuring the means to satisfy hunger; but it is never asked whether this hunger and its satisfaction by food are a dictate of wisdom—whether aliment would really contribute to the welfare of our being. These wants secure their end and object, by the pleasure which their gratification imparts. They communicate to the animal machine its self-moving, self-regulating, self-determining, self-preserving power. They are the lamp, the light within us which a beneficent Creator has given to illumine our path, to direct our course, to conduct us in safety along the devious way of life—the law of nature stamped upon this noble work of God to serve as a compass, a pole-star, and beacon, to guide us through the dangers which beset our passage; to protect us amid the ten thousand destructive elements with which we are surrounded; threatening shipwreck to our existence; to give security when led astray by erring and short-sighted reason, or hurried into danger by the impetuosity of passion. They are the tutelary god of the internal man, whose oracular voice is always timely, always audible, always true; whose warnings are not to be disregarded, whose demands are not to be refused or deferred, whose threats are not an empty sound—a sword in its sheath—a lion in chains, impotent and harmless. They are thunder, accompanied with the riving and desolating power of the electric element. The guardian spirit remonstrates at abuses, whether of excess or defect, in a tone so loud and so earnest, that it seldom fails to be heard and obeyed. It is by giving himself to the direction of these *wants*,

that man secures his life and his health, and arrives at the highest perfection of which his organization is susceptible. By rendering obedience to their calls, he acquires and preserves that development, that proportion and soundness of his organs, which is requisite to the proper and vigorous discharge of all his functions—that happy condition of the whole system in which every faculty, mental and corporeal, possesses the greatest possible degree of activity and power which is compatible with the due exercise of the other faculties—a condition which is the *ne plus ultra* of natural perfection—the very end and object of our organic being.

These organic wants, or instincts, or laws, if obeyed, it has been said, conduct to the enjoyments of health and the vigor of the faculties. This is as much as to say, that the violation of the laws in question, is followed by disorder—an imperfect and painful discharge of the functions; for a law without a penalty attached to its infringement, whether it be in the organic or physical world, morals or jurisprudence, is virtually no law at all. The penalty is not the mere animal suffering attendant upon the process of violation, but something subsequent or consequent. It is an effect and not a concomitant. Like the punishment which he suffers who breaks a civil or moral law, it rarely strikes down the offender in the instant of transgression. It often follows at the distance of a long period. A man may die of the injury done his organization by a single meal of indigestible food, though it is not often that the functions are appreciably deranged until the stomach has been repeatedly goaded and abused. A paroxysm of powerful mental excitement may kill instantaneously, by its effects upon the brain, though more frequently the progress of disorder is more tardy, and by degrees.

The design of all penalties, attached to the infringement of law, is to secure obedience. The momentary pain which is the instant attendant upon violation, is not always adequate to this purpose. To prevent the infraction of moral laws, the voice of conscience is too feeble of itself; therefore, a penalty, remorse, has been instituted, the better to secure their observance. With the same design, disease is made the natural consequence of the infringement of the organic laws. This penalty operates as an additional motive to obedience. It gives an inducement which is needed. The load and oppression at stomach, which accompany a surfeit, are often insufficient to prevent the indulgence of a pampered appetite; and the pains of indigestion are incurred. The nausea and head-ache, which attend a fit of intoxication, are of too trifling inconvenience to stay the trembling hand of the self-destroyer; and the drunkard has a diseased and broken constitution in prospect. Instinct has a powerful adjunct in the penalty in question. The tormenting disorders, and the mental and corporeal imbecility,

which are seen to follow a life of intemperance and vice, make a forcible appeal to the reason and judgments of men, and through the intervention of the rational powers, exert an influence upon conduct, which instinct and conscience would fail to do. Thus, the thought of retribution is constantly in the mind of him who transgresses the laws of his nature. Not only the reasoning faculty, but the imagination and the passions are brought in to aid in the work of self-preservation. Fear is one of the strongest motives to action, and incentives to duty. The fate of the drunkard makes an effectual appeal to this sentiment, often when it fails to lay hold of any other principle of our nature; and we observe a sensible pause in the step of him who is placed in the way of temptation.—Thus, we see the well-being of our organs and faculties surrounded by double walls, and guarded by double centres. Every provision seems to have been made, in the constitution of our bodies, to secure the end of human organic existence—the perfection of man in all his natures, animal, intellectual and affective. Among these provisions, we would rank first and chief, the unerring principle within, the almost sole guide of the brute, which suggests in the instant of need, the path of danger and the path of safety—which is the ultimate rule of action in every emergency which concerns the internal economy of our organs and functions, and the perpetuity of the species. We have next reason, coinciding in its judgments with instinct, which finds, in the penalty which is the reward of transgression, a powerful additional motive to obedience to the laws of our organs. It demonstrates, by an appeal to experience and example, the folly and danger of error; while the imagination sets before the mind, in all its freshness, the melancholy fate of him who has stifled the cries of nature, and paints in vivid colors the desolating consequences of vicious and unnatural indulgence. The controlling and powerful sentiment of fear is thus made to bear upon the interests of the economy, and to contribute its efficient aid to deter from acts of disobedience.

Notwithstanding all that has been done by a kind providence to insure the observance of the organic laws, and to secure sound health and faculties to man, these laws are infringed, the barriers which serves as his defense against impending dangers thrown down, and pain and disease and imbecility of all the powers incurred. These laws, notwithstanding the warnings of instinct, the convictions of reason, the lessons of experience and example, and the fear of retribution, are still broken. We see man in the full light of day, against the just weight of motives and the known interests of self, still the transgressor of those wise and easily obeyed laws which have been established for the guidance and government of his actions. This fact, so abundantly confirmed by observation and



historical record, presents man as the hardy violator of organic, as other facts do of moral, laws; a fact wholly inexplicable except on the supposition of a deep and thorough contamination of human nature—of human nature in all its departments; a contamination, by the way, but little noticed, except in the limited department of *moral* action. The philosophy of this strange preference of evil to good, of wrong to right, of sickness to health, and of vice to virtue, of a present momentary enjoyment to a whole life or a whole eternity of future happiness, we shall not attempt here to unfold.

And here we would remark, that all those actions, involving the health and of course usefulness of man, which relate to a *known* rule, have relation both to organic and moral laws. They come distinctly within the pale of morality, and are to be considered not only as salutary and injurious, but also as *right* and *wrong*. He who destroys his faculties and defeats the ends of his being, by errors of conduct which reason and experience tell him are errors, is as truly blameworthy as he who steals or murders; and is deserving of the penalty of remorse as well as of disease. We have long been in the habit of considering the drunkard as a *culpable* suicide; but we have almost forgotten the fact that the minister who knowingly ruins his constitution, and puts an end to his means of doing good, by the indulgence of his appetites, or the neglect of exercise and relaxation, is also a *guilty self-murderer*.

And now, having traced to their source those numerous and nameless complaints which are included under the general term ill-health, we are furnished with a key which promises to unlock the secrets that belong to our subject. We see *why* literary men are so frequently invalids—why they so often undermine their constitutions, destroy their usefulness, and mar all personal enjoyment. We do not wonder that death, virtual and actual, is so frequent and so early among the ranks of students. We see them hardy, perpetual, fearless transgressors of the institutions of nature. We see them first strangle the sentinels which are stationed at the portals of health, and then walk triumphantly over all that they guarded; as if, because the voice of instinct was silenced, the temple which it secured was no longer sacred. Their habits are almost a continuous violation of the laws of our organization—a continuous neglect of the prescribed and essential conditions of existence. Why then should they not suffer the penalty of disobedience?—the calamities which come in the train of transgression?—Shall the laws of nature be reversed or suspended? Shall they not rather be enforced, the judgments accompanying their infringement executed, and the authority and dignity of law sustained? The laws of nature are fixed, immutable and universal; and he who dares to refuse them obedience, dares at the same time to invoke upon himself disaster and ruin.

It is often said that our animal nature is an unworthy part of the man ; that it is foreign and contaminating in its influence, and deserving only of contempt, condemnation, and mortification ; that its suggestions are all false and corrupt, and lead away from every thing which is dignified and nobling. These sentiments are worthy of a fanatic who has fallen into a trance. But shall he who makes a practical principle of such monastic dogmas, who lives as though his corporeal functions were given him only to be contemned and abused, or as if he were an ethereal and disembodied spirit ;— shall he who makes such dreams his rule of conduct, escape the punishment due such exhibitions of folly and transcendentalism, and demanded by violated law ? Rather, shall he not be deprived of the invigorating influence of that which he so much despises, and left to his *visions* of unearthly bliss, to quaff the nectar of imagined felicity ; while the substantial realities of health and vigorous faculties are reserved for such as are contented to view things as they are, to exercise all their powers according to the dictates of conscience, of reason and nature, and to act well the part which belongs to them in their *true* relations.

The manner in which the occupations and habits of literary men lead to the complaints of which they are so often the victims, will be understood by the following considerations, on the particular relations of the exercise of the organs, to the soundness of the functions and vigor of the faculties.

To develop any given faculty, the organ upon which it depends must be *exercised*. This law admits of no exceptions. Every one knows the fixed the unalterable relation between action and power. No man acquires muscular developement and strength, except by the persevering use of his muscles. The rope-dancer and the tumbler are enabled to perform their wonderful feats of dexterity and activity, by the patient and continued exercise of certain portions of the body. The brain does not acquire its usual size, or exhibit powerful action, if it has always been accustomed to repose. The energy and penetration of Newton and Franklin's minds, were the product of intense and protracted thought. For an exemplification of the effects of inaction upon all the powers, mental and corporeal, read an account of Caspar Hanser, the youth who is supposed to have been confined, in a sitting and recumbent posture, in a dark dungeon, from infancy to the age of seventeen years.

To develop any given faculty, the organ upon which it depends must be *properly* exercised.

Exercise, in the first place, must *not be too early*, or before the organ is adequately developed. If it is premature, the effects are uniformly disastrous, because a law of nature has been violated. These laws, as hertofore said, cannot be trifled with. The ruinous consequences of severe muscular exercise on the growth and strength

of young animals is familiar to every farmer. Any faculty may be nearly annihilated by powerful exertion of its organ in the earlier periods of life, when its structure is delicate and immature. Would that this fact were more generally understood and regarded, particularly in the intellectual education of children. Every physiologist, indeed every observer knows, that the reflective faculties are but triflingly unfolded until after the age of puberty; and yet, the chief design of parents and teachers seems to be to tax to the uttermost, almost from the cradle, these very faculties—faculties which are the latest in attaining maturity. Their aim seems to be to make boys and girls (and perhaps infants,) think like men! And what is the result? Why, the same that follows an attempt to make an infant digest the food of man, or a child perform the bodily labor of an adult—to wit, destruction of function. We are persuaded that the injury which the present notions of early education are calculated to produce is immense, and we here feel compelled to denounce them as extravagant and incalculably mischievous. It is true, the design of the parent and instructor is sometimes defeated by the obstinacy of the child, in refusing to learn mathematics and natural theology; yet it is unfortunately sometimes partially successful. Unremitting stimulation, incessant goading, finally and gradually overcomes the resistance offered by the laws of our organs. Then the intellect is irretrievably ruined; or, as is occasionally the fact, when the exercise is more carefully begun and carried on, the brain is prematurely and unnaturally developed, and an intellectual prodigy is the result,—the grand consummation of all the fond hopes of teacher, doting parents and friends. Then there follows untimely death, and blasted hopes, and broken hearts. Every physician has observed, that unusually precocious children rarely attain the years of manhood, or, if life is preserved, reach the full maturity of their faculties. They are monsters—the product of successful attempts to violate the laws of nature, and like others of their kind, rarely survive, and still more rarely produce fruit. Their heads are always large, showing a size and energy of brain incompatible with soundness of organ and integrity of the functions. Rickety children are distinguished by mental precocity, have always large heads, and are as uniformly short-lived. When will it be learned that the best minds are not made by too anxious attempts at early intellectual culture? The perceptive and affective faculties are those chiefly with which we have to do in the first periods of life: we have little concern with the reflective.

Exercise, in the second place, must be in *due degree*. If it exceeds or falls short of this due degree, or in other words, if the proper *functional excitants*\* are applied in either excess or defi-

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\* By functional excitant is meant the agent of influence which excites an organ



ciency, derangement of function or disease is the result. Thus, a light too intense injures the organ of sight, and produces blindness. Long confinement in the dark is followed by nearly the same result—such an intolerance of light as to render vision almost impracticable, where much of this agent is present. Too much and too little muscular excitement is, in either case, succeeded by muscular incapacity. Too severe and protracted exercise of the mind will bring on head-ache, and finally inability to think, and disease of the brain. Long continued abstinence from mental exercise renders the brain intolerant of severe thought, and eventually incapable of discharging its function properly and efficiently. Every one has felt the difficulty of applying his mind steadily and vigorously, to any subject, after protracted intellectual repose or dissipation. Thus, what are called *vacations*, in colleges and academies, should be rather frequent than long.

Exercise, in the third place, must be *alternated with rest*. This is a law from which none of our organs are exempt. The heart, the lungs, the respiratory muscles, regularly and statedly obey it. In locomotion, the different and opposing sets of muscles contract and relax alternately. The impossibility of the long continued exertion of a single set, will be proved by the attempt to sustain a weight at arm's length. The effort soon becomes painful, and ere long, impracticable. The senses, too, and the brain, frequently need this sort of repose. Let the eye be steadily fixed upon a particular object, for a length of time, and fatigue follows, which presently becomes excessive. We are now obliged to change the object, the time occupied in the act of change giving the required rest. If one applies his mind intently, for a long period, to the solution of a mathematical problem, he experiences a sensation of weariness, which is a warning to desist, and the signal of needed repose. What are called the voluntary organs, as the brain, the organs of sense, and that part of the muscular system which is under the control of the will, in addition to the momentary interruption of action, at short intervals, which is required during the working state, also demand, for the purposes of more entire relaxation and renovation, that more complete and protracted repose which is called *sleep*.

Health consists, it has been said, in the proper exercise of *all* the functions. Man is not physically divisible like matter. He is made up, it is true, of separate parts, anatomically distinct; but these have such an intimacy of union, such numerous and extended sympathies with one another, that each of them has an absolute

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to action. Thus light is the proper functional excitant to the organ of vision; air in a state of undulation, to that of hearing; tactile bodies to that of touch; the will to the muscles of voluntary motion; thought and passion to the brain; nutritious matter to the stomach, etc. etc.

dependence upon each and upon the whole. Any considerable injury, received by an individual important organ, is immediately communicated to all the rest, and involves in diseased action the whole circle of the functions. In a fit of indigestion, from whatever cause, who can think with steadiness and clearness? The brain sympathises with the suffering stomach, and refuses to act. If a disordered condition of the cerebral organ has been induced, by intense and protracted thought or emotion, the stomach obstinately declines its customary work of digestion. Food is not desired, and if taken, is not converted into nutritive matter. The man who has brought on debility of the muscular system, by the neglect of bodily exercise, has thus enfeebled his brain and his digestive apparatus, and incapacitated himself for great and prolonged exertion, either intellectual or corporeal. *All* the great organs, then, must be in a sound condition in order to secure health and strength, and the capacity for vigorous action of whatsoever kind. And no individual organ can discharge its function, with ease and energy, while any of those with which it is closely connected and reciprocates freely, are laboring under embarrassment. Hence the necessity of the due exercise of all the principal organs of the body, when we would preserve health or cultivate any given faculty, the intellect for instance. Let this but half-known fact be recollected and pondered by the thoughtless student, who supposes that a powerful and comprehensive mind can inhabit a wretched and dilapidated corporeal tenement.

Exercise should be so managed, as to *counteract the unnatural preponderance of particular organs*. Disproportionate development and activity of an individual important organ, is sure to concentrate too much the vital energies upon itself, and to abstract them unduly from other portions of the body, thus disturbing the equilibrium of health; in the first case, overwhelming with excessive, and in the second, destroying with deficient, excitement. The obvious and only mode of correcting such constitutional and dangerous inequalities, is by a skillful regulation and adaptation of the functional excitants, diminishing their intensity where an organ is disproportionately large and active, and increasing their strength when it is unnaturally small and weak. When this disproportion is considerable, the wants or instincts of the too active organ cannot always be trusted, as the sole regulator of the requisite degree of excitement; for these wants, individually considered, always crave more than is consistent with the balance of health, and the due exercise of all the vital functions. All the wants or laws of the human system are to be regarded. In our actions, we are not to be guided by a single subordinate law, but by the laws of the economy as they are combined, or exist in a system. Thus, we are not to be governed by any *particular* instinctive impulse, but

by the general dictate of all the organic wants. If this is done, we shall be in no danger of being carried away and shipwrecked, by the destroying influence of some lying appetite or passion. When the brain is uncommonly large, and its functions unusually vigorous, in childhood, there is a strong desire of mental excitement, which if gratified, interferes injuriously with the wants of other organs also demanding their proportion of excitement. In such cases, the dictate of nature, of reason, and of all experience, is, to withdraw the usual stimuli to mental action. Thus according to a law of our economy, those energies which ought to be distributed over the body, not only cease longer to concenter unnaturally about the brain; but this organ, by the effect of diminished exercise, actually, by degrees, loses its unnatural preponderance, and, after a period, shrinks within those bounds of relative size which are compatible with a strict equilibrium of the organs and powers. Whereas, if the opposite course is pursued, as is frequently done—if the too voluminous and too energetic brain is indulged to the utmost in its individual desire for action, and perhaps even goaded on by all the expedients which the ingenuity of a fond parent can devise, not only is irreparable injury done to the vital functions, but the over excited member itself, acquiring more developement, and accumulating more power, by the violence of its own action, is finally disorganized, and death is the consequence. The result most favorable to self-preservation, which can follow such outrage upon the laws of the system, is fatuity—an event by which, in such cases, nature preserves the *fragments* of the human machine, by cutting off the source from whence the destructive influence comes.

The intellectual and moral faculties are the noblest attributes of man. They maintain him in his most exalted relations, and confer on him the capacity of endless improvement. It is the principal and more direct object of education, to secure them their natural ascendancy, in the economy of man—to give them the highest degree of developement which is compatible with that just balance of the faculties and organs, to which we have so often referred. To attain this end, all the laws of organization which have been noticed, must be regarded, if we would not encounter disaster and defeat. The appropriate excitement must be applied to the brain, at a proper time, with a steady, discriminating, dexterous hand; not neglecting the law of relaxation, nor the watchful regard which is due to the system at large. The mighty power of such a mode of management, in attaining the object to which it is directed, we are confident, has not yet been thoroughly tested. Without doubt, some of our faculties, the intellectual in particular, are susceptible of a degree of developement, by pursuing the right method, which has not yet been known. The wonderful



results of education upon the eye, the ear, and the other senses, are familiar to all. There can be no question of its power to produce effects as surprising upon the brain and mind.

We do not wonder, that the true object of education, on the plan which is generally pursued, is to a great extent defeated. On tracing the progress of the youth, destined for a literary life, through the whole course of his preparatory, collegiate, and professional studies, we are not surprised that he so often makes a wreck of himself and his hopes, before he has realized any of the numerous expectations which ambition has so fondly cherished. Often both he and his teacher seem to regard nothing as worthy of a thought, except the intellect. Ignorant of the relations between intellect and brain, and between brain and the other organs, they seem to think that, though the body become a heap of ruins, they are only near spectators. Every consideration seems to be merged in the single one to call forth into instant action, the greatest possible amount of mind. Ultimate effects are scarcely thought of. Sometimes, ruined health is rather desired, because of its frequent association with scholarship!

We have already said, that intellectual exercise is not of itself a cause of deranged health—that degree of exercise, which, as its ultimate result, is productive of the greatest intellectual energy. We confidently believe, that, out of a given number of students who have the name of becoming sickly by *hard study*, not one in ten can be found, who could not have made all the attainments which were made during this period of study, with perfect impunity, had his course been marked by an observance of the organic laws. Even when the mind is the avenue of disease, the *intellectual* department of it, is by no means the common channel by which it finds admission. That portion of man which renders him susceptible of *emotions*, is far more frequently the inlet of mischief. It is true, there is a condition of the system, and that, unfortunately, of common occurrence, in which any considerable mental exercise of any kind is injurious; but this is the result of disease—the effect of previous error of conduct—the penalty of violated law. A disordered brain can no more bear thought, than an inflamed eye can light, or an irritable stomach, food. Exercise, in either case, is followed by pain, sometimes agony, which is a sure indication that exercise is hurtful. Repose is a dictate of nature. It is required for the purpose of restoration. It is the only condition on which recovery can take place. To expose a man ill of *phrenitis*, to the excitement of a powerful emotion, would be madness. It would be like directing upon the eye in *ophthalmia*, the rays of a meridian sun. A brain which has been injured by neglecting the conditions of health, requires the rest of months or years: sometimes of life. A little over exertion, under such

circumstances, may protract recovery indefinitely. A single imprudence may undo the work of a month. Here we see the penalty of disobedience in its just magnitude. Here we may see reflected, in the bright and fearful characters of truth, the superlative folly of those habits of literary men, by which, for a doubtful and trifling *immediate* good, (as the saving of an hour's time,) or for the gratification of some inferior and subordinate propensity, health is sacrificed, and half a life of suffering, and mental and corporeal incapacity, incurred. Such is the wisdom of three fourths of these ghostly characters ("shadowy films" both in body and mind,) which so stare upon us from the ranks of literary valedudinarianism! Such is the source of that frailty and susceptibility of the constitution, so much complained of in these times, which renders an hour's vigorous mental exercise productive of such nervous excitability and exhaustion, as to unfit for any serious business, for the space of a week. When the brain and system have become thus morbidly excitable, it is necessary to reduce the amount of intellectual exercise to the point of easy intellectual action; just as in indigestion we reduce the amount of food to the point of easy digestion.

The mode in which what is called *relaxation* from intellectual pursuits operates to preserve health, is not well understood. The human mind is made up of certain assemblages of faculties, which may be comprehended under the general terms, propensities, moral sentiments, perceptive and reflective faculties. These make sentient, thinking, emotive, acting, man. They are all essential ingredients in his constitution—all demand a due degree of exercise. If this demand is disregarded, the brain and system suffers, and health is lost. If a single set of these faculties is called into frequent and fatiguing action, while the wants of all the others are neglected, natural laws are infringed, and sure detriment experienced. Now, the occupation of the student requires almost the exclusive use of the *reflective* powers. All the others, of equal importance, are in a state of profound repose, during the period of study. The object of relaxation is double; first, to give rest to such faculties as have become weary of exertion, and secondly, to call into use such as have become *tired* of inaction. That relaxation which effects only the first of these objects, does not promise to preserve health. Something *more* than the mere intermission of labor is required. Man is not a mere mass of intellect—a cold, lifeless, heartless, lump of reasoning clay. He has affections and sentiments. He is susceptible of emotion and admiration; of love, of hope, of joy. He is a lover of works of taste, of social enjoyments, and innocent pleasures. He must be regarded in relation to all these constituents of his being—all these susceptibilities. These relations, it has already been said, are neglected during the

hours of study, and it is a principal object of relaxation, to bestow on them the attention which the wants of the economy require—to give the livelier and lighter faculties and feelings, the needed exercise of which they have been deprived. Who has not felt the instant renovating effect of a few minutes' light conversation, or listening to some delightful strains of music, after having been all day engaged upon some knotty question of divinity or metaphysics? And what is the cause of this wonderful invigoration of all the powers, but that which we have pointed out? Would thrice the time spent in mere solitary lounging have answered the same purpose? There are those who think that even innocent amusements are unworthy of the dignity of man; but we cannot think so, until his constitution is changed. Students we know require them. It is true, there are some who are naturally so grave as to need none but grave occupations; but most are not so made. Among the latter, we are persuaded, all attempts to suppress entirely the lighter feelings and playful dispositions, will be either unsuccessful or disastrous in effect.

But the neglect of muscular exercise is the most obvious peculiarity of the life of the literary man, and is that circumstance which has chiefly attracted attention. This neglect is certainly *one* of the causes, and a powerful one, of the ill-health of studious men; but, from what has been said, it will be seen that it is not exclusive, as seems often to be assumed. It is perfectly true that the muscular system constitutes an important portion of the body, acts a part in the economy of great importance, and involves in its sympathies and relations the most momentous interests. It is true that muscular exercise is an indispensable condition of health. But, as, in the actual case of the student, the neglect of this condition is only a concomitant cause of the complaints from which he suffers, it follows, that the observance of the condition in question, would not of itself secure him soundness of body. This fact has been nearly overlooked in the plans which have lately been recommended and adopted, for removing the evils attendant upon literary pursuits—a circumstance which is sufficient to defeat the purpose of the otherwise best contrived plan.

To illustrate our meaning;—let us suppose that a student, who spends twelve hours a day in his study, should undertake to renew and sustain his vigor by devoting, steadily and frequently, a sufficient period of time to such sort of exercise as is furnished by pulling and lifting at the corner of a church, or by simple and silent contortions of body in some lonely garret, would he feel his powers recruited and his constitution fortified, by these means? Surely, he has, or may have, a sufficiency of *muscular* action. Why then does he become pale, lose strength and fall into a decline? We answer—because he still violates the laws of his nature—neglects the



prescribed conditions of health ; conditions which are not fulfilled by the occasional interruption of intellectual labor, even when accompanied by adequate corporeal exercise. The purposes of relaxation require, as has already been said, that the *feelings* be called into play. That exercise be salutary, it must excite pleasurable feelings. It must have nothing mechanical about it. While it allows repose to the intellect, it should communicate an agreeable excitement to the affections and passions—those faculties which have been dormant during the period of study. Hence, the attempts to preserve health in our institutions of learning by the introduction of artificial modes of exercise, as gymnastics, have generally failed of their object, and finally fallen into disuetude.

From the above considerations, it follows, that exercise in order to answer the design of relaxation, must be adapted to the tastes and dispositions of men. Peculiarities of temperament, and other individual differences, must be regarded. Some, by long habit or by constitution, require more bodily activity than others. Some are buoyant and lively ; some are distinguished by staidness and gravity. The exercise of the former should have combined with it much that is exciting, while that of the latter needs less of this ingredient. Hence, the great difficulty of prescribing any particular *kind*, as universally applicable to the wants of students. No one kind that can be named will suit every case. Irksomeness and disagreeable associations must be avoided. There must be excited some glow of feeling—a result which is not produced uniformly by the same means. We do not feel prepared, then, to lay down any *rules* which should be followed in order to secure the benefits of relaxation. We would leave to every man, as much as possible, the freedom of choice. Constraint is not wise. The idea of compulsion takes away very much of the pleasure, which we might otherwise derive from the doing of a thing. It defeats the very end of exercise. He who walks, not from that internal impulse which renders walking agreeable, but because a master commands it, is not likely to be much invigorated by his obedience. The student, who at the hour of *intermission*, sallies from his room, and, in compliance with a law of college, resorts to the wood pile, there to renew his energies by the use of the axe, does not often find that for which he seeks, if every stroke is accompanied with a groan, as it is apt to be in such cases. The principal object of exercise is defeated the moment we make it a *task*. It would be a sort of incongruity in terms to call such exercise relaxation.

Though all we have said about the impossibility of giving general rules admitting of no exceptions, is true ; yet, we are well persuaded, that, in a great majority of cases, what are called the *active sports* are peculiarly well adapted to the wants of students, for the purposes of relaxation. To stigmatize such sports as puerile

and degrading, is in our view indicative of a narrow mind. They are usually sought by the young with eagerness, and pursued with an interest bordering on enthusiasm. While they admit the repose of the wearied intellect, they give the stimulus of action to the very organs, and faculties, and feelings, which need it. They are not *circumscribed* in their influence, like those species of exercise which do not excite the pleasureable emotions, or like those sedentary amusements and indulgences which do not require bodily action. Their effects upon the economy are universal—are felt every where. A glow of pleasure, as indescribable as it is exquisite, diffuses itself over all the organs. Man is renovated in all his nature, and becomes himself again. The vigor of the intellect is revived, and study once more becomes easy and successful. An hour spent in the chase or at a game of ball, (if such a thing is relished,) we are confident will be productive of more *relaxation*—will do more towards preserving the health of the student, than thrice the time, devoted to the same object, spent in a different way,—in an employment, for instance, which exerts only a limited influence upon the human powers. If the student is compelled, through poverty, to provide for his own support, he should, if possible, enjoy the means of making his exercise subservient to this end. But even in this case, we would not urge it upon him as a *duty*, to take his exercise in this way. Much less would we give our countenance to the notion, that it is wise or safe to insist on labor as the only proper exercise of students at large. To make it useful it must be voluntary. While we would recommend *play* where it is relished, we would also advise agriculture, horticulture, mechanical pursuits, botanical excursions, etc. respectively, where these were preferred. It is true, we should feel bound to give a preference of productive to unproductive employments in the abstract; but we ought never to sacrifice the real interests of the student, for *pecuniary* profit. We are here considering the eligibility of different modes of exercise, as the means of health. Considered in this light, relaxation is the great criterion of useful exercise; and we ought to make no selection which does not regard this purpose as the supreme object. We would be contented to see health secured; and would not be over scrupulous about the *means*, provided they are harmless. The student's direct object, let it be recollected, is *scholarship*. He is not sent to *college* to learn trades, or the manual part of agriculture. To him, exercise is only important as it renders the attainment of intellectual excellence practicable. We would urge only so much as is necessary to this end. More than this would be rather injurious to high intellectual culture. Not only would it consume time, but it would concentrate too much the vital energy upon the muscles, thus abstracting it unduly from the brain. For this reason, we would rather discour-

age bodily activity beyond what is requisite to preserve the integrity of the functions, as unfavorable to intellectual development.

The *business* of the student is *study*. This is his occupation. He is sent to a literary institution to pursue it. Other occupations he has no concern with, except as they involve or stand related to his main design. Study is *labor*, as truly so, as severe in kind, and as exhausting in its effects, as the employment of any mechanic. It is taken for granted that this labor is as much in amount as the system can sustain without injury. This amount is imposed as a *task*. Now is it not right, after this task has been finished, that the student should be allowed a short space of time which he may call his own? We have already shown that health demands it. Shall he then be *tasked* still, forced into the corn-field, (the moment his lesson has been recited,) there *again* to earn his bread by another species of labor? Why should students fare so much worse than any other description of laborers? Suppose each can earn another shilling a day, by devoting all his leisure time to brick-making, (health out of the account ;) where is the justice of urging it upon him as a duty, when the farmer is permitted to enjoy his "noon spell" unmolested, though he might in the mean time, add a few pence to the general stock of national wealth, by occupying himself in some handicraft employment? Why this distinction? Why should the young student have a harder master than the mechanic boy? The latter always has a leisure hour for *play*, and nobody complains of it. General opinion has given its sanction to its propriety and even necessity; and general opinion in such cases is always right. Why not, then, allow the the same liberty to the student, when, weary of labor, he has finished his daily task? In either case in our opinion, it would be cruel to barter this liberty for the miserable consideration of pecuniary profit. We see it bartered in the case of the wretched English operative, and are satisfied with the result of the experiment. We hope the sordid spirit, which so grinds to the dust the inmates of the manufactories of Britain, may never find a place in this country.

Our views of *manual labor institutions* may be gathered from what has been said. We approve highly of such institutions, when they are designed. and it is distinctly understood, that one of their primary objects is to prepare youth for mechanical trades, or practical farming. We should rejoice too to see the means thus opened, for those who must support themselves, while preparing for college. But we should object to their incorporation with institutions which have a very different design. We have given our reasons for believing that manual labor, *as a stated and prescribed duty*, cannot, to any great extent, be made to answer the ends of that *relaxation* which all agree



the student needs. Indeed, we cannot look upon such labor as relaxation at all. On this ground more particularly, we would not make it a requisition.

The report of Mr. Weld, however, is a document of great value. It contains the fruits, evidently, of much inquiry and reflection. It is written with great spirit—a zeal almost enthusiastic. It contains some specimens of eloquent writing, mingled, however, with more sarcasm than we should judge expedient in such a production. Mr. W. can have no patience with the miserable effeminacy of the times. “Those nauseous specimens of *diluted* manhood, scribbling sentimentality in albums, and lisping insipidity,” which unfortunately are so common among the stronger sex in “this age of degeneracy,” excite in him an indignation which he is at no pains to conceal.











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